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THE

NTC

Story by
SPC Angela Schleicher

SUPPORT

TEAM



“THE National Training Center Corps Support Battalion may be the best battalion you’ve never heard of,” said its commander, LTC Jonathon Lake, and he can list the facts to back up his claim.

With nearly 1,000 soldiers and civilians assigned, the battalion supports almost every aspect of the NTC’s mission to provide world-class training for the 70,000 active, National Guard and Reserve soldiers who come to Fort Irwin, Calif., each year. The battalion’s accomplishments are often overshadowed by the more visible presence of its customer units, the 11th

Armored Cavalry Regiment and the NTC Operations Group. But the CSB “Desert Warriors” are the ones who keep the installation running.

The battalion provides direct support and general support maintenance for the NTC’s fleet of more than 1,200 vehicles and 15,000 items of equipment, and maintains equipment for NTC’s tenant organizations, especially the 11th ACR opposing force.

SPC Jason Mosher, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic for the 31st Maintenance Company, said the fleet contains two full brigades worth of equipment that sustains an operation tempo nearly four times higher than the Army average, and that maintaining this equipment requires around-the-clock operations.

“I do all the heavy work on the heavy equipment transporters — like pulling engines, fixing transmissions and axles or working on any other large component,” Mosher said. “There’s a lot to do, but I love my job.”

CSB is task-organized, and the three maintenance companies have been blended together for optimum results.

“There is no one MOS that is more important than another here, and all the jobs rely on each other,” Mosher said. “If I don’t do my job, other soldiers can’t fulfill their mission.”

In addition to its maintenance mission, the battalion operates a supply support activity and provides heavy-equipment transporter, or HET, support for both the 11th ACR and the

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PFC Raymond Craig of the 31st Maintenance Company directs SGT Donald Kalawaia in hoisting a tracked vehicle onto a heavy equipment transporter.

A soldier from the 669th Maint. Co. welds components from a light-weight vehicle. Such repairs are a daily occurrence at the NTC.



Heavy chains being installed by 31st Maint. Co. soldiers help ensure that a tracked vehicle loaded aboard a heavy equipment transporter will not shift as the HET moves.

training units that come here to train.

The battalion gives air-ambulance support to training units, the installation and surrounding communities, as well as providing aviation support for both the installation and the OPFOR. It also provides administrative support for two explosive ordnance disposal detachments, which give EOD support to the installation and to cities throughout southern California.

Yet even with this diversity of missions, direct-support and general-support backlogs are down to 310 jobs, the lowest in recent history. In December 1998 there were 1,350 jobs backlogged.

"When the backlog is down, I have no trouble going home and relaxing at the end of the day," said 1LT George

Durhan, shop officer for the 557th Maint. Co. "But when the backlog is up, I can't sleep right, I can't hear right and all I can think about are those numbers."

This kind of dedication has reaped some rewards. The Air Ambulance Company has won Forces Command's safety excellence award three years in a row, and the battalion has won the FORSCOM supply excellence award two years in a row. In addition, Lake said, the flight-safety record is excellent, with more than 2,000 safe-flight hours.

The CSB also saves Fort Irwin \$15 million annually in cost avoidance through the rebuilding of engines, HET missions and asset redistribution.

"Our success is a function of

everyone getting involved," said SGT Caesar Jones, CSB's retention NCO. "Our officers and NCOs take the time to discuss all the options and provide situational awareness. That helps soldiers see why they're doing what they do and shows them they're a part of something," he said.

Training and maintenance are tough, dirty jobs at the NTC. As the saying goes, "Life is hard in the desert."

But thanks to CSB's continuous, around-the-clock efforts, the vehicles run, the troops train and the NTC accomplishes its mission of providing world-class training to a world-class Army.

As Durhan said, "There's no battalion I'd rather be in." □